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Inside Information

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USDA TO OFFER SINGLE-SOURCE DATA

A mountain of time-sensitive information currently available both electronically and in print form from several USDA agencies will be available July 1 from a single electronic source: Martin Marietta Data Systems, of Orlando, Fla.

The new service will disseminate daily and weekly market reports from the Agricultural Marketing Service; crop and livestock reports from the Statistical Reporting Service; outlook and situation reports from the Economic Research Service, foreign agricultural situation reports, export sales reports and, foreign trade leads from the Foreign Agricultural Service; news releases from the Office of Information, and other perishable information.

Regular information and statistical material of a long-term nature--such as periodicals and other non-perishable publications--will continue to be available in their usual format and from their usual sources in USDA.

Most likely users are expected to be organizations that further distribute USDA information, such as commercial electronic information and videotex services, publishers, news services, farm organizations, and trade associations.

With the proper equipment, such as high speed modems, farmers and other individuals could access the new service, also, for a fee.

USDA won't be charging for the information. But users of the service will pay Martin Marietta Data Systems a minimum fee of \$150 a month for the basic service of accessing the information. Special hardware and software developed for accessing the system cost more.

USDA and its cooperators, such as the land grant universities and state departments of agriculture, which use the service will pay the usual computer time-share fees but not a monthly minimum.

Contacts: Information about reports and releases: the News Division, Office of Information, Room 406-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone: (202) 447-4026.

How to subscribe: Joseph F. Freburger or Charles H. Rider, Martin Marietta Data Systems, 6301 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770. Telephone: (301) 982-6792.

USDA'S SUPER SELLER HEADING FOR NEW YORK

Every year for a decade, Kate Alfrend of USDA's Office of Information has loaded herself down with press kits, booklets, posters and any number of other paraphernalia, and headed for the magazine markets of the Big Apple.

It's her job to tell editors of the big general interest magazines what interesting things are going on in USDA and associated institutions.

On Sunday, May 5, she's going again. Based on previous years, she'll visit the food, nutrition, gardening, and feature editors of nearly 40 magazines during her week's stay.

The material she is showing the editors has been gleaned from USDA agencies and land grant institutions.

Without this material, Alfrend admits, she would have little to talk about in New York.

To be effective, Alfrend is very particular about what she offers the editors. She has learned through the years what is acceptable and what is poison to the editors. Furthermore, she keeps track of the many editorial changes that sweep national magazines, tracking some people from junior editor positions to top editorships of major magazines.

The magazines are preparing their Christmas season issues when she visits them in the spring. Still, Alfrend has been surprised to find occasionally that a magazine will break deadline rules to put in something of last-minute interest such as child-artist posters from the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Alfrend is always on the look-out for good material to take to her editors, even for this year's trip. Her telephone number is (202) 447-2033.

USDA TV CHANGING TRANSPONDERS. WHEW!

Jim Johnson is losing his 10/D, so he will be in a REAL time bind at the end of May. To explain:

Johnson is chief of the Radio & Television Division of USDA's Office of Information. For a couple of years now he has been bouncing one television program or another off a particular transponder on a satellite named Westar IV, which is circling the Earth. His target was Transponder 10/D, which Johnson reached through Bonneville Telecommunications.

Since last October, he's been using 10/D for two half-hour television shows and another 15-minute televised news offering.

Recently, however, Bonneville said it wants to close 10/D to such "occasional" use.

So Johnson started looking for a substitute service. He's asking for bids now.

The trouble is, he won't know until May 28 who the winning bidder is.

The last broadcast on Old 10/D is May 31. Johnson has less than a week in which to notify about 200 television stations where they can find "A Better Way" and "Down to Earth," not to mention the 15-minute news offering, when they aim their dishes skyward.

Here's what Johnson is doing to ease the transition:

He's mailing out 928 letters--to all the TV stations in the country--asking whether they are accessing or want to access the USDA programs. Those who respond "yes" will get a telephone call from Office of Information staffers immediately after the May 28 bid opening, notifying them where and when to "tune in."

Whew!

LIAISON OFFICE MOVES TO OGPA

USDA's Office of Public Liaison is now part of USDA's Office of Governmental and Public Affairs.

Its mission will remain the same, notes its director, Christina Mosher Wilson--that is, it will continue to serve as a link between the Department and special interest groups, such as farm organizations and environmental groups.

OPL obtains information for special interest groups, provides them speakers, obtains access for them to the Secretary of Agriculture and others within the Department, sets up group meetings and conducts special projects, such as the annual Farm Women's Forum and monthly briefings, and guides the Department's Partnership in Education efforts.

Last year, the office conducted two Challenge Forums, in which the Secretary challenged the private sector to address a particular problem and draw up action plans.

Activities this year, Wilson said, will center around the 1985 Farm Bill.

The Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs is Wilmer D. Mizell. OGPA also incorporates the Office of Information, the Office of Congressional Relations, and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

NEW CONSUMER CATALOG AVAILABLE

The spring 1985 edition of "Consumer Information Catalog," published by the Consumer Information Center of the General Services Administration, is available now.

For a free copy, send name and address to the Consumer Information Center, Dept. MB, Pueblo, Colorado 81009.

Some of the offerings are free, such as "Cancer Prevention: Good News, Better News, Best News," and "Some Things You Should Know About Prescription Drugs."

Others will cost you some change, such as "How To Buy A Home Computer" (cost: 50 cents), and "How To Help Your Children Achieve in School" (\$3.75).

Back in 1981, about 70 percent of the publications listed in that year's catalog were free. Today, half of them are free.

In the same period, distribution of booklets and pamphlets through the center has plummeted about 77 percent--from a peak of 26 million publications in 1981 to just 6 million last year, reports The Washington Post.

AG FACTS (AGFAX) ARE AVAILABLE

Been looking for some current facts on agriculture to use in a speech?

One quick source is Agfax, a relatively new feature of "USDA Online," available to users of the ITT Dialcom computer system.

From the number of jobs created by agriculture to the balance of trade, to the number of farms and the discovery of vitamins, such facts are available by calling up the Dialcom computer, and, at the system prompt typing: USDA AGFAX. You can then scan, or search the facts, and then make your selection to read.

Any questions or suggestions about this service should be addressed to Denver Browning (AGR209), Special Programs Division, Rm. 536-A, OI, USDA.

SEMINAR LOOKED AT PRINTING QUALITY

The five levels of printing quality established by the Government Printing Office and what you can do about it if the printer doesn't meet the standards you specified--these were discussed at a recent seminar sponsored by the Printing Branch of the Publishing Division of USDA's Office of Information in Washington, D.C.

Some 85 persons attended from USDA agencies.

"There's a lot of misunderstanding 'out there' about printing quality," explained Al Senter, assistant branch chief. "That's why we held the seminar."

The seminar developed these themes:

- ° The top level (Level I) of GPO printing quality might include such publications as art books and medical journals. Senter said he could recall two Level One publications recently: two four-color charts on grading standards for eggs and meat.

- ° Most USDA four-color jobs fall into Level II, which may include yearbooks, professional papers, and litho prints.

- ° Level III might include departmental stationery, annual reports, charts, and maps.

- ° Level IV would include the Federal Register and the Congressional Record.

- ° Level V is described as duplicating quality.

Tests for quality vary by grade level. GPO tests for defects that may be critical (requiring a reprint) or major, which may result in a cost discount.

The tests, in turn, are based on specific sampling techniques.

Those attending the seminar were told how to submit a complaint properly and how to pull random samplings.

Three GPO representatives helped conduct the seminar.

Questions on printing quality standards can be fielded by Warren Bell, chief of OI's Printing Branch, on (202) 447-7509, or Senter, on (202) 447-7175.

WRITER-EDITORS NEEDED

The Information Staff of USDA's Economics Management Staff is looking for a couple of writer-editors who can turn an economic analysis into something readable, newsworthy, and fit for public distribution.

These positions are at the GS-5, 7, or 9 level.

Duties would include one or more of the following: editing economic reports on agricultural subjects, writing magazine articles on developments in the farm and food economy, and preparing press releases.

Interested candidates may send a resume (or SF-171) and writing samples to Diane Decker or Eric Van Chantfort, EMS-Inf., 400 GHI Building, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Additional information may be obtained by calling either Decker on (202) 382-9759, or Van Chantfort on (202) 382-9758. Decker's Dialcom electronic mailbox is AGR075.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either John Crowley or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGR009 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

